



Chambers's Journal

SIXTH SERIES.

DR BARLOW'S SECRET.

By JAMES WORKMAN.

CHAPTER I.

IT was a calm, warm summer afternoon. The sun shone from a cloudless sky on wood and meadow and winding stream, and seemed to linger lovingly on the ivied walls of Myrtle Villa, the residence of Joseph Hawthorne, J.P. Birds were fluting and chirping among the trees, bees and butterflies hummed and fluttered among the flowers in the garden, and from the tennis-court came the light-hearted laughter of happy youth. In an easy-chair in his comfortable library, with a handkerchief over his head to keep away the flies, Mr Hawthorne was placidly dozing.

An observer might reasonably have concluded that no shadow rested upon this placid rural abode, and that here, if anywhere, was a little oasis of peaceful tranquillity in the midst of a noisy, bustling world. No one could have foreseen, least of all those who were about to play a leading part in it, what a curious little drama, bristling with complications and surprises, was about to be performed on this unlikely stage.

In a sitting-room, by the open window, sat Miss Nellie Hawthorne and Dr Thomas Barlow, who had contrived to slip away from the tennis-court in order to enjoy a little private talk. Dick, Nellie's young brother, whose language was generally more pithy than polite, said they 'sneaked away'; but he was indignant because the absence of Nellie, who was usually his partner, forced him to play with an energetic young lady whose skill was painfully out of proportion to her enthusiasm. Nellie reclined in a cane reading-chair. Tom brought a stool and sat at her feet with his arms clasped round his legs and his chin on his knees. It wasn't a very comfortable position, but it enabled him to see Nellie's slim figure clothed in the daintiest of white flannel costumes, and her pretty face and the sunlight in her hair. Nellie glanced at him with a pleasant smile. She thought he looked well

in his whites and blazer, with the dark curls just peeping out from beneath his cap.

In their case the course of true love had hitherto run with phenomenal smoothness and rapidity. They had known each other barely six months, and were to be married within as many weeks. Dr Barlow had bought the practice of an old-established local practitioner, and, though a total stranger to the district, had at once become immensely popular. Summoned to attend Mr Hawthorne almost immediately after his arrival, he had pulled the worthy magistrate through a dangerous illness, and made an enthusiastic friend of him during the process. An intimate acquaintance with Nellie was, of course, the inevitable result of his frequent visits to Myrtle Villa, and he showed his good taste by falling in love with her at first sight. Being of a sanguine and impulsive disposition, he had thenceforth prosecuted his suit with the most refreshing promptitude and energy. His vigour and intrepidity soon met with their due reward. Nellie, after a few coy struggles to retain her freedom, capitulated to so brisk and masterful a wooer, and, her father's consent being readily obtained, they were promptly engaged, and an early date fixed for the marriage. Some few wiseacres shook their heads, and repeated the musty adage about marrying in haste and repenting at leisure; but, speaking generally, the engagement was received with acclamation, for Nellie was a universal favourite, and Dr Barlow had already gained a host of friends and well-wishers. Though so little was known of him, his geniality, good looks, irreproachable manners, and professional ability had produced so favourable an impression that no one, not even Mr Hawthorne, thought of inquiring very closely into his antecedents or troubling themselves about his past, with one important exception. That exception was Nellie herself.

If women ever secure a preponderating influence in the making of our laws, they will no doubt

pass a measure which will compel every suitor to present his intended bride, on the day he is engaged, with a full and accurate summary of the principal events of his past life. To many girls the period which has elapsed before they became themselves the chief interest in the lives of their lovers is a source of some inquietude. Had they the power, they would no doubt make confession compulsory; but, not having it, they pursue a less direct, but it may be equally effective, method. Sweetly, insidiously, in unguarded moments, in melting moods, they gather piece by piece, here a little and there a little, the details of their lovers' sojourn in that *terra incognita* of the past. To the young man whose conscience is void of offence this tender cross-examination may be one of the most delightful experiences of his life; but deft must be the tongue and swift the brain of him who would fain keep secret the record of the years that are gone. There are few men who find the situation altogether unembarrassing; for there are few, if any, whose fancy has not fluttered among the garden of girls, like a butterfly among the flowers, until it finally came to rest upon the chosen blossom. It is just upon this peculiarly delicate topic that the feminine mind delights to dwell, as Barlow had already discovered to his cost. He therefore perceived with some uneasiness that Nellie was again approaching the one subject of conversation which he would infinitely have preferred to avoid.

'And so you never really cared for any one but me, Tom?' she asked, with a kind of happy wonder.

'N—n—no, I never did, Nellie,' he rejoined after a moment's pause. 'I've had passing fancies, like all fellows. I've liked girls because they danced well, or sang well, or looked rather nice, and all that sort of thing, but I never really loved any one till I met you.'

'And you've told me everything, quite everything, about your past life?'

Now Tom was in one of those confidential moods when a man is very apt to let himself go, and tell things he would afterwards give his ears to recall. Therefore, though there was an incident in his past life he had no wish to speak of, and indeed was quite determined to keep secret, he couldn't for the life of him help hinting that there was something he hadn't told Nellie, and didn't mean to. Of course, he couldn't have chosen a more infallible method of arousing the girl's curiosity. Probably he enjoyed doing so. Possibly he thought that a man who had passed through experiences which he was reluctant to speak about would appear a much more romantic person in the eyes of an imaginative girl.

'My dear Nellie,' he replied, with all the solemnity of a young man who imagines that his experience of life has been unusually varied and complete, 'there are generally some passages in the life of a man who, like myself, has mixed much with the world that he would prefer to pass over in silence.'

He sighed in a way that would have greatly tickled a middle-aged woman, but which suggested to Nellie a series of exquisitely romantic situations. Naturally she became more curious than ever.

'I thought there were to be no secrets between us, Tom,' she answered in a slightly aggrieved tone. 'I thought we were to tell each other everything.'

'That's the kind of arrangement that works very well in theory, Nellie, but is very apt to break down in practice. I have told you more about my past life than I ever told any one before; but I went through an experience, a very trying experience, about which I confess I would rather not speak.'

There was a perceptible pause, during which Nellie gazed with a half-quizzical, half-anxious glance at her betrothed.

'Was—was she very pretty, Tom?' she asked at length.

'I didn't say the trouble was about a girl, Nellie.'

'Perhaps not; but if it wasn't, you wouldn't object to tell me about it. Was it long ago?'

Tom shifted uneasily in his seat. He began to wish that he had dexterously evaded the subject, as he had frequently contrived to do in the past.

'My dear girl,' he said, 'don't you think we might let the subject drop? You may be sure that I would not keep anything from you if I thought it advisable you should know it.'

'Oh, very well, Tom, if you would rather I said nothing more about it, of course I won't,' rejoined Nellie meekly, and then immediately added, 'But I think you might just tell me if it was about a girl.'

'Well, yes, it was.'

'And was she very sweet?'

'Now, Nellie,' expostulated Tom, 'you're forgetting your promise.'

'Well, my dear Tom,' exclaimed Nellie, 'what about your own promise? Didn't you promise to tell me everything?'

'Now, really, my dear girl, don't you think you're just a little unreasonable?'

Nellie glanced at him with twinkling eyes.

'Why, Tom,' she said, 'you don't mean to say that you're getting vexed?'

'Of course I'm not,' rejoined Tom. 'What an idea! But, really, you know, my dear girl, your persistency shows a want of confidence which pains me.'

'Well, and doesn't your silence show a want of confidence in me?'

'Oh Nellie!' groaned poor Barlow, wriggling about on his stool, 'I wish you'd let the subject drop.'

But Nellie's curiosity had got the bit between its teeth, and could no longer be controlled. Her cheeks flushed and her eyes sparkled.

'I would if I could, Tom; but I can't—I simply can't!' she exclaimed. 'You don't know how a

thing like that affects a girl. I feel as though I must know all about it now, and should be miserable if I didn't. You shouldn't have mentioned it.'

'I wish to goodness I hadn't.'

'Well, you have done so now, and consequently you may just as well tell me everything. Were you very much in love with her?'

'I suppose I thought so at first,' rejoined Tom impatiently; 'but I soon discovered that I had never really loved her—that it was all fancy.'

'And did—did the horrid creature jilt you, Tom?'

'I didn't say that, Nellie.'

'Ah, I suppose it was you, you cruel thing, that got the poor girl to care for you, and then left her; wasn't it now? I'm sure it was.'

'Well, if you're sure it was, there's no need for me to say anything more. Now, do please let the subject drop. You're making a mountain out of a molehill. It was only a passing fancy.'

'No, I'm not going to let you off now. You've gone too far to draw back. You'll have to tell me everything. Was she like me? Was she fair or dark? Was she tall or—dumpy? Have you got a photograph of her? Yes, you have, you have. I can see it in your face. Oh, do show it me!—oh, please, Tom, do show it me!'

'Really, my dear,' exclaimed Barlow, rising impatiently to his feet, 'you are carrying the joke too far. I simply decline to say anything more about it. If you can't trust me'—

He was interrupted, to his intense relief, by a knock at the door.

'Come in,' exclaimed Nellie.

A servant entered with a telegram.

'Telegram for Dr Barlow, miss.'

Barlow clutched eagerly at the telegram, like a drowning man at a straw.

'By Jove!' he exclaimed, 'it's from a patient. I shall have to run away at once.'

'Any answer, sir?' asked the servant.

'No, you needn't wait.—I'll really have to ask you to excuse me, Nellie. I must be off. Good-bye.'

'Good-bye, Tom,' answered Nellie, and then she laid her hand on his arm, and raised her pretty, innocent face to his with the most bewitching and fascinating smile, 'and next time you come, you won't forget to bring the photograph with you, will you?'

Tom laughingly extricated himself; but as he got outside and closed the door behind him he muttered angrily to himself:

'Confound the photograph! What an ass I was to give myself away like that!'

Nellie stepped to the pier-glass, and glanced with an arch smile at the charming reflection of what was justly considered, even by critics of her own sex, the prettiest face for miles round West-beach. She arranged her crisp, wavy hair with one or two dexterous little pats, and nodded

laughingly at the merry, dimpled face that smiled and nodded back to her from the mirror.

'He might just as well tell me at once,' she soliloquised. 'I'm sure to get it out of him, every bit of it, sooner or later. A girl can get anything out of a man who—likes her, if she only knows how to go about it. And I must know everything; I must and will. I feel as if I couldn't exist now without getting to the bottom of it.'

At that moment her brother Dick, a brisk, curly-haired, bright-eyed youth, came hurriedly through the French window with a blazer over his arm.

'Hallo!' he exclaimed; 'where's Tom?'

'He's just gone,' said Nellie calmly.

She had sunk instantaneously into a chair with a book in her hand.

'Oh, confound him!' said Dick. 'Well,' he added, 'I don't suppose it'll matter much after all.'

'What do you mean?'

'Well, you know Tomkyns—short-sighted man with spectacles and a long neck, always squabbling?'

'Yes.'

'Tom's blazer and his are the same colour. Tom's put his on by mistake, and Tomkyns is as anxious about that blazer as if he thought Tom was going to pawn it. Anyhow, he'll have to wear Tom's—I've got it here—and exchange next time they're here together. Hallo! there's a letter in one of the pockets. Here, you'd better stick to it, and hand it over to Tom when you see him.'

He tossed the letter into her lap, and promptly disappeared. Nellie glanced at it at first carelessly, and then with growing interest. It bore an American stamp and the New York postmark, and was addressed in a feminine handwriting. She could tell from the date that it had arrived that day. Probably it had been handed to Barlow by the postman as he came to tennis. Having glanced through it, he would naturally thrust it into the pocket of his blazer. She turned it over and over, carefully examined the handwriting, which was neat and well formed, and then slipped it into her pocket. But the postmark still continued to puzzle her.

'From New York!' she said musingly. 'He never told me he had any correspondent in New York. Who can it be?'

She picked up the book again, but the words conveyed no meaning to her mind, and presently she found that she had read a paragraph three times over without in the least understanding what it meant. However charming she might be, she was not exempt from the little foibles of her sex, and anything in the shape of a secret had an irresistible fascination for her. The postmark and the pretty handwriting seemed to be stamped upon the page she was vainly attempting to read.

'Who can it be?' she kept thinking to herself. 'I wonder who it can be? He never told me that he knew any one in New York.'

She wished Tom would return in order that she might cross-examine him, and a dimple stole into her cheek as she thought of how she would worm the truth out of him at the first convenient opportunity. She couldn't help reflecting that it would be easy to set her mind at rest by taking a peep at the letter, but of course she would never dream of doing that. It would not be strictly honourable, and Tom might be vexed. No; she would wait until she caught him quite alone, and then he would most decidedly have to make a full confession. He should not escape next time. Her eyes twinkled with merriment as she remembered that, but for the inopportune arrival of the telegram, she would in all probability have learned the truth about that interesting passage in Tom's life that he was so reluctant to speak of.

It was an unfortunate train of thought, for she presently began to wonder whether there could possibly be any connection between the letter from New York and Tom's coy silence with regard to that mysterious incident of his past. When the idea first suggested itself she smiled and put it aside as being too absurdly fanciful to be taken seriously. But, absurd or not, it presently came back, and she struggled in vain to banish it from her mind. Then the temptation to take just one glance at the letter returned with renewed force, and she jumped from her chair and stepped hurriedly to the window with some vague intention of promptly joining the tennis party. She was far too healthy a girl, both mentally and physically, to be of a suspicious nature; but Tom's evident embarrassment and persistent efforts to evade her questions had aroused her curiosity to such a pitch that she was beginning to feel afraid of being left alone with the letter lest she should be tempted, in spite of her scruples, to read it.

Little by little the conviction was growing in her mind that the contents of the letter would reveal the secret that Tom was so anxious to preserve, and probably enable her to identify the girl who had acquired some influence over him in the past. He had never before alluded to the matter in the most distant way. Something must have recalled it to his memory, and it was the

letter; she was sure it was the letter. Her fingers literally twitched to take it out and examine it; but with an effort, superfeminine if not superhuman, she controlled the impulse.

'No,' she said in the words of the poet, 'I'll trust him all in all or not at all.'

She imagined that she had finally settled the matter, but this was far from being the case. In her excitement she began to attach an exaggerated importance to Tom's silence. She reflected, with a feeling of shame at her own disloyalty, that, after all, she knew very little about him—had never seen or heard of him until he came into the neighbourhood from Highchurch six or seven months before. Suppose that, after all, Tom should have graver reasons than she had imagined for evading her questions, for hushing up the past. Her cheeks flushed with anger at herself for entertaining such suspicions for one moment; but the poisonous thought having once entered her mind, she could no longer treat the matter lightly. The more she thought over it the more serious it appeared to become. She was naturally most loyal to those she loved, and it was a source of misery to her to distrust one in whom she had hitherto placed implicit confidence.

Then she began to tell herself that she was really making a fuss about nothing; that if Tom were present he would willingly give her leave to read the letter, and probably laugh at the scruples which had prevented her doing so. And even if he would rather she didn't, a husband should keep no secrets from his wife; and though she was not yet Tom's wife, she would be in the course of a few weeks. Yet still she hesitated.

'It wouldn't be fair, I suppose,' she murmured, 'to have just one little peep at the signature. No, I suppose it wouldn't—I—I suppose it wouldn't. Yet I don't quite see why I shouldn't. He promised to tell me everything—and I feel almost sure it's from her. I don't know why exactly, but I feel certain it is. Surely under the circumstances it wouldn't be dishonourable just to peep at the signature.'

Her hand stole into her pocket and half-unconsciously grasped the letter.

A SWISS BEE-SCHOOL

By GEORGE GALE THOMAS.



CERTAINLY it is not a school for the training of bees. The energetic and ingenious little creatures have, by their natural instincts, more nearly realised the ideal state than any democracy on earth. It is a school for the training of those who would learn the secrets of bee-culture and become apiarists.

Three-quarters of a mile up the mountain-side

on the verdant Rosenberg it stands overlooking the quaint little town of Zug, whose ancient towers, white-painted houses, and brown roofs peep out from the trees, contrasting with the blue water of the lovely lake. Here, in this verdant spot, I found the *Bienenmuseum*; and its custodian, Herr Theiler, gave me a ready welcome as an English comrade of the craft, and showed me his treasures with the enthusiasm of a bee-lover.

There were photographs of famous bee-masters the world over; samples of honey from every canton and every crop, from the rich honey of the cherry orchards of Zug to the alabaster-like product of the white clover of Bernina; specimen hives; bees of all kinds; as well as a thousand other things of interest, from petrified bees to manufactured wax in various forms. In the latter section was a miniature portrait in wax *relief*—an accomplishment in which the Swiss of Zug excelled in bygone days before the introduction of photography. The work was of the most delicate character, and the wax had been coloured so that every feature was represented true to life.

Adjoining the museum, however, is the *châlet* where the actual bee-culture is carried on. Upon entering I found myself in a large room with rows of doors one above the other in the wooden walls. Opposite, a small glass tower projected from the farther side of the house, and here I found myself at once in the midst—save for the protecting glass around—of thousands of bees on the wing. More than a hundred alighting-boards at the entrances to the various hives were scattered over the face of the house on both sides of the tower. These were painted in all the colours of the rainbow, to enable the bees each to recognise its own hive—bees having a strong sense of colour—and to save the battles which always take place if bees attempt to enter hives not their own.

It is in this *châlet* that bee-masters are trained in the school of practice. Students may come here for the summer from all the cantons of Switzerland. Not only is the course free to all, but the cantonal governments give premiums to the pupils in order to encourage the study.

The enormous difference in the yield from the old-fashioned straw hives—known as ‘skeps’ in England—and that from the frame-hives, arranged on the scientific plan, has convinced the Swiss government that only the spread of a wider technical knowledge is needed to develop a most extensive and profitable industry, for which the country is admirably adapted. Hence the inducements offered for the scientific study of bee-culture.

At the present time there are twenty-five students—some of them mere lads—all being of the peasant class. To each student a hive is allotted, and a card is affixed to the back, bearing his name, with notes of the progress of the colony of which he has the care. The rest of the hives are in the charge of the bee-master, and these, with the profits of the periodical publications, entirely support the Swiss Beekeepers’ Society—*Verein Schweizerischer Bienenfreunde*—which itself receives no subsidy from the State for its work.

One of the doors within the house is opened, disclosing a glass back, through which the pupil

may observe at leisure every movement of his little charges at work, while suffering none of the discomforts of those who study the inside of a small hive.

The hundred and five colonies on the Rosenberg number, on an average, from thirty to sixty thousand bees each, so that in the *châlet* the enormous number of some five million bees have their home. They are chiefly of the small brown variety common in Germany, and differ little, if at all, from the native English bee. The bee-master had several other kinds in stock also; but he pinned his faith to the little German bees.

‘Neither Italians nor Carniolans for me,’ said he; ‘these little bees are out gathering when the others will not venture out for the heat.’

Unfortunately in Switzerland, as elsewhere, the greater number of bee-keepers have little or no exact knowledge of bees. They put down a ‘skep’ full of bees in the spring, and take out the honey after the season, often suffocating the little workers, as our own rustics do. Slowly but surely, however, the knowledge of the craft is spreading, and in the tiniest hamlets one may now come upon a modern bee-house with a dozen colonies at work reaping a harvest for some enterprising peasant.

At Kriens, on the northern side of Mount Pilatus, I came upon a bee-house with some thirty colonies, which find their pasturage on the clover-clad slopes of the mountain. At Einsiedeln—the Swiss Lourdes—whither a veritable army of pilgrims wend their way every year, the monks have taken to bee-culture, and now have a house with some sixty hives to supply the wants of the four hundred inhabitants of the monastery. Even up at the Bernina Hospice, on the summit of the Bernina Pass—at a height of more than 7000 feet above the level of the sea—there are large colonies of bees, which find pasturage on the white clover growing beside the glacier.

Yet the supply is all too small, for there is, perhaps, no country in the world where honey is used so universally as in Switzerland. Throughout the country it is an article of daily consumption. At every hotel it is served, with unflinching regularity, with the *café complet*; but the enormous demand has led to adulteration, and the purest honey is rarely found in the hotels. The *ouvrier* class consume it most largely. With his bread and butter the workman always has honey. ‘It is healthy,’ he says truly; ‘it builds up the body—and it is cheap.’

According to the most recent returns, there are about a quarter of a million hives in the whole country, or one to every twelve inhabitants, and the yield of a frame-hive often reaches a hundred pounds of honey per season. The yield from a ‘skep,’ however, is much smaller; so that, at an average of fifty pounds per hive, the honey

harvest of Switzerland may be taken at twelve millions of pounds avoirdupois, or some four pounds per head of the resident population. These figures do not, of course, represent the actual ratio of consumption, as account must be taken of the amount consumed by the multitude of tourists.

When it is remembered that the honey is gained only from the beginning of May until the end of July, that gathered later being required for the bees' own use, it will be seen how unresting is the energy of the little workers. Nor is this

more than a fraction of the harvest which only awaits gathering on the verdant hillsides and rich valleys of the land of Tell.

From the little school at Zug every year go out future bee-masters, while the extensive library of works on apiculture is always in circulation through the post among the members of the society, and it will not be long before the ten thousand millions of bees—to take a moderate estimate—who gather in the Swiss honey-harvest during the hot summer days shall give place to a still more numerous army.

THE RED RAT'S DAUGHTER.

CHAPTER II.



WHEN Browne reached the yacht, after bidding good-bye to the girl he had rescued, he found his friends much exercised in their minds concerning him. They had themselves been overtaken by the fog, and very naturally they had supposed that their host, seeing it coming on, had returned to the yacht without waiting for them. Their surprise, therefore, when they arrived on board and found him still missing was scarcely to be wondered at. In consequence, when he descended the companion-ladder and entered the saloon, he had to undergo a cross-examination as to his movements. Strangely enough, this solicitude for his welfare was far from being pleasing to him. He had made up his mind to say nothing whatsoever concerning the adventures of the afternoon, and yet, as he soon discovered, it was difficult to account for the time he had spent ashore if he kept silence on the subject. Accordingly he made the best excuse that occurred to him, and by disclosing a half-truth induced them to suppose that he had followed their party towards the waterfall, and had in consequence been lost in the fog.

'It was scarcely kind of you to cause us so much anxiety,' said Miss Verney in a low voice as he approached the piano at which she was sitting. 'I assure you we have been most concerned about you; and, if you had not come on board very soon, Captain Marsh and Mr Foote were going ashore again in search of you.'

'That would have been very kind of them,' said Browne, dropping into an easy-chair; 'but there would not have been the least necessity for it. I am quite capable of taking care of myself.'

'Nasty things mountains,' said Jimmy Foote to the company at large. 'I don't trust 'em myself. I remember once on the Rigi going out with old Simeon Baynes, the American millionaire fellow, you know, and his daughter, the girl who married

that Italian count who fought Constantovitch and was afterwards killed in Abyssinia. At one place we very nearly went over the edge, every man-jack of us, and I vowed I'd never do such a thing again. It would have been a nice bit of irony—wouldn't it?—after having been poverty-stricken all one's life, to drop through the air thirteen hundred feet in the company of five million dollars. I'm perfectly certain of one thing, however: if it hadn't been for the girl's presence of mind I should not have been here to-day. As it was, she saved my life, and, until she married, I never could be sufficiently grateful to her.'

'Only until she married!' said Lady Imogen, looking up from the novel she was reading. 'How was it your gratitude did not last longer than that?'

'Doesn't somebody say that gratitude is akin to love?' answered Foote, with a chuckle. 'Of course I argued that, since she was foolish enough to show her bad taste by marrying somebody else, it would scarcely have become me to be grateful.'

Browne glanced at Foote rather sharply. What did he mean by talking of life-saving on mountains, on this evening of all others? Had he heard anything? But Jimmy's face was all innocence.

At that moment the dressing gong sounded, and every one rose, preparatory to departing to their respective cabins.

'Where is Maas?' Browne inquired of Marsh, who was the last to leave.

'He is on deck, I think,' replied the other; and as he spoke the individual in question made his appearance down the companion-ladder, carrying in his hand a pair of field-glasses.

For some reason or another, dinner that night was scarcely as successful as usual. The English mail had come in, and the Duchess had had a worrying letter from the Duke, who had been commanded to Osborne among the salt of the

earth, when he wanted to be in the Highlands among the grouse; Miss Verney had not yet recovered from what she considered Browne's ill-treatment of herself that afternoon; while one of the many kind friends of the American Ambassador had forwarded him information concerning a debate in Congress, in order that he might see in what sort of estimation he was held by a certain portion of his fellow-countrymen. Never a very talkative man, Browne this evening was even more silent than usual. The recollection of a certain pale face and a pair of beautiful eyes haunted him continually. Indeed, had it not been for Barrington-Marsh and Jimmy Foote, who did their duty manfully, the meal would have been a distinct failure as far as its general liveliness was concerned. As it was, no one was sorry when an adjournment was made for coffee to the deck above. Under the influence of this gentle stimulant, however, and the wonderful quiet of the fjord, things brightened somewhat. But the improvement was not maintained; the pauses gradually grew longer and more frequent, and soon after ten o'clock the ladies succumbed to the general inertness, and disappeared below.

According to custom, the majority of the men immediately adjourned to the smoking-room forward. Browne, however, excused himself on the plea that he was tired. Maas followed suit; and, when the others had taken themselves off, the pair stood leaning against the bulwarks, smoking and watching the lights of the village ashore.

'I wonder how you and I would have turned out,' said Maas quietly, when they had been standing at the rails for some minutes, 'if we had been born and bred in this little village and had never seen any sort of life outside the Geiranger?'

'I don't doubt but that we should have been better in many ways,' Browne replied. 'I can assure you there are times when I get sick to death of the inane existence we lead.'

'*Leben heisst trümen; weise sein heisst angenehm trümen*,' quoted Maas, half to himself and half to his cigar. 'Schiller was not so very far out after all.'

'A beautiful sentiment,' said Browne as he flicked the ash off his cigar and watched it drop into the water alongside. 'But, however desirous we may be of dreaming agreeably, our world will still take good care that we wake up just at the moment when we are most anxious to curl on sleeping.'

'In order that we should not be disillusioned, my friend,' said Maas. 'The starving man dreams of City banquets, and wakes to the unpleasant knowledge that it does not do to go to sleep on an empty stomach. The debtor imagines himself the possessor of millions, and wakes to find the man-in-possession seated by his bedside.

But there is one cure; and you should adopt it, my dear Browne.'

'What is that?'

'Marriage, my friend! Get yourself a wife and you will have no time to think of such things. Doesn't your Ben Jonson say that marriage is the best state for man in general?'

'Marriage!' retorted Browne scornfully. 'It always comes back to that. I tell you I have come to hate the very sound of the word. To hear people talk you would think marriage is the pivot on which our lives turn. They never seem to realise that it is the rock upon which we most often go to pieces. What is a London season but a monster market, in which men and women are sold to the highest bidders, irrespective of inclination or regard? I tell you, Maas, the way these things are managed in what we call English society borders on the indecent. Lord A. is rich; consequently a hundred mothers offer him their daughters. He may be what he pleases—an honourable man, or the greatest blackguard at large upon the earth. In nine cases out of ten it makes little or no difference, provided, of course, he has a fine establishment and the settlements are satisfactory. At the commencement of the season the girls are brought up to London, to be tricked out, regardless of expense, by the fashionable dressmakers of the day. They are paraded here, there, and everywhere, like horses in a dealer's yard; are warned of the men who have no money, but who might very possibly make them happy; while they are ordered by the "home authorities" to encourage those who have substantial bank balances and nothing else to recommend them. As the question of love makes no sort of difference, it receives no consideration. After their friends have sent them expensive presents, which in most cases they cannot afford, but give in order that they may keep up appearances with their neighbours and tradesmen, the happy couple stand side by side before the altar at St George's and swear the most solemn oath of their lives; that done, they proceed to spend their honeymoon in Egypt, Switzerland, or the Riviera, where they are presented with ample opportunity of growing tired of one another. Returning to town, the man usually goes back to his old life and the woman to hers. The result is a period of mutual distrust and deceit; an awakening follows, and later on we have the *cause célèbre*, and, holding up our hands in horror, say, "Dear me, how very shocking!" In the face of all this, we have the audacity to curl our lips and to call the French system unnatural!'

'I am afraid, dear Browne, you are not yourself to-night,' said Maas, with a gentle little laugh. 'The mistake of believing that a society marriage, with money on the side of the man and beauty on that of the woman, must irretrievably result in misfortune is a very common one.

For my part, I am singular enough to believe it may turn out as well if not better than any other.'

'I wasn't aware that optimism was your strong point,' retorted Browne. 'For my part, I feel, after the quiet of this fjord, as if I could turn my back on London and never go near it again.'

He spoke with such earnestness that Maas for once in his life was almost astonished. He watched his companion as he lit another cigar.

'One thing is quite certain,' he said at length; your walk this afternoon did you more harm than good. The fog must have got into your blood; and yet, if you will not think me impertinent to say so, Miss Verney gave you a welcome such as many men would go through fire and water to receive.'

Browne grunted scornfully. He was not going to discuss Miss Verney's opinion of himself with his present companion. Accordingly he changed the subject abruptly by inquiring whether Maas had made any plans for the ensuing winter.

'I am a methodical man,' replied the latter, with a smile at his companion's naïve handling of the situation, 'and all my movements are arranged some months ahead. When this charming voyage is at an end, and I have thanked you for your delightful hospitality, I shall hope to spend a fortnight with our dear Duchess in the Midlands; after that I am due in Paris for a week or ten days; then, like the swallow, I fly south; shall dawdle along the Mediterranean for three or four months, probably cross to Cairo, and then work my way slowly back to England in time for the spring. What have you thought of doing?'

'Goodness knows,' Browne replied lugubriously. 'At first I thought of Rajputana; but I seem to have done, and to be tired of doing, everything. They tell me tigers are scarce in India; this morning I felt almost inclined to take a run out to the Cape for three months with the big game.'

'You said as much in the smoking-room last night, I remember,' Maas replied. 'Pray, what has occurred since then to make you change your mind?'

'I do not know myself,' said Browne. 'I feel restless and unsettled to-night, that is all. Do you think I should care for Russia?'

'For Russia?' cried his companion in complete surprise. 'What on earth makes you think of Russia?'

Browne shook his head.

'It's a notion I have,' he answered, though for my own part I am certain that until that moment he had never thought of it. 'Do you remember Demetrovitch, that handsome fellow with the enormous moustache who stayed with me last year at Newmarket?'

'I remember him perfectly,' Maas replied; and had Browne been watching his face, instead of looking at the little hotel ashore, he would in all probability have noticed that a peculiar smile played round the corners of his mouth as he said it. 'But what has Demetrovitch to do with your proposed trip to Russia? I had an idea that he was ordered by the Czar to spend two years upon his estates.'

'Exactly! so he was. That accounts for my notion. He has often asked me to pay him a visit. Besides, I have never seen Petersburg in the winter, and I'm told it's rather good fun.'

'You will be bored to death,' the other answered. 'If you go, I'll give you a month in which to be back in England. Now I think, with your permission, I'll retire. It's after eleven, and there's something about these fjords that never fails to make me sleepy. Good-night, *mon cher ami*, and pleasant dreams to you.'

Browne bade him good-night, and when the other disappeared into the companion, returned to his contemplation of the shore. The night was so still that the ripple of the wavelets on the beach, half a mile or so away, could be distinctly heard. The men had left the smoking-room; and save the solitary figure of the officer on the bridge, and a hand forward by the cable range, Browne had the deck to himself. And yet he was not altogether alone, for his memory was still haunted by the recollection of the same sweet face, with the dark, lustrous eyes, that had been with him all the evening. Do what he would, he could not endow the adventure of the afternoon with the commonplace air he had tried to bestow upon it. Something told him that it was destined to play a more important part in his life's history than would at first glance appear to be the case. And yet he was far from being a susceptible young man. The training he had received would have been sufficient to prevent that. For upwards of an hour he remained where he was, thinking and thinking, and yet never coming any nearer a definite conclusion. Then, throwing away what remained of his cigar, he bestowed a final glance upon the shore, and went below to his cabin, to dream, over and over again, of the adventure that had befallen him that afternoon.

Whatever else may have been said of it, the weather next morning was certainly not propitious; the mountains surrounding the bay were hidden in thick mist, and rain was falling steadily. After breakfast the male portion of the party adjourned to the smoking-room, while the ladies engaged themselves writing letters or with their novels in the saloon below.

Browne alone seemed in good spirits. While the others were railing at the fog, and idly speculating as to whether it would clear, he seemed to derive a considerable amount of satisfaction from it.

About ten o'clock he announced his intention of going ashore, in order, he said, that he might confer with a certain local authority regarding his proposed departure for the south next day. As a matter of politeness he inquired whether any of his guests would accompany him, and received an answer in the negative from all who happened to be in the smoking-room at the time. His valet accordingly brought him his mackintosh, and he had put it on and was moving towards the gangway when Maas made his appearance from the saloon companion.

'Is it possible you are going ashore?' he inquired in a tone of mild surprise. 'If so, and you will have me, I will beg leave to accompany you. If I stay on board I shall go to sleep, and if I go to sleep I shall wake up ill-tempered; so that, if you would save your guests from that annoyance, I should advise you to take me with you.'

Though Browne could very well have dispensed with his company, common politeness prevented him from objecting to the proposal. Accordingly he expressed his pleasure at the arrangement, and when they had descended the gangway they took their places in the boat together. For the first time during the excursion, and also for the first time in the years they had known each other, Browne felt inclined to quarrel with Maas; and yet there was nothing in the other's behaviour towards him to which he could take exception.

Maas could see that Browne was not himself, and he accordingly set himself to remedy the trouble as far as lay in his power. So well did he succeed that by the time the boat reached the tiny landing-stage his host was almost himself again.

'Now you must do just as you please,' said Maas when they had landed. 'Do not consider me in the matter at all, I beg of you; I can amuse myself very well. Personally I feel inclined for a walk up the mountain road.'

'Do so, then, by all means,' said his host, who was by no means sorry to hear him arrive at this decision. 'If I were you, however, I should stick to the road; these fogs are not things to be taken lightly.'

'I quite agree with you,' said Maas. Then, bidding the other good-bye, he set off on his excursion.

Browne, who was conscientiousness itself, walked along the hillside to the residence of the functionary whom he had professedly come ashore to see, and when he had consulted him upon the point at issue, made his way in the direction of the hotel. Accosting the manager in the hall, he inquired whether it would be possible to obtain an interview with Madame Bernstein.

'Most certainly, sir,' the man replied. 'If you will follow me I will conduct you to her.'

So saying, he led the way down the long wooden passage towards a room at the farther

end. Into this Browne was ushered, while the man departed in search of the lady. What occasioned the delay it is impossible to say, but fully a quarter of an hour elapsed before madame made her appearance. She greeted him with a great show of cordiality. Taking both his hands in hers, she held them while she thanked him, in fluent French, for what she called his bravery on the preceding afternoon.

'*Mon Dieu!*' said she. 'What should I have done had you not been there to help her? Had she been killed I should never have known happiness again. It was such a risk to run. She is so reckless. She fills me with consternation whenever she goes out alone.'

This was not at all what Browne had bargained for. However, under the circumstances, it would not only have been unwise, but practically impossible, for him to protest. You cannot save a young lady's life and expect to escape her relatives' thanks, however much you may desire to do so. After these had been offered to him, however, he managed to discover an opportunity of inquiring after her present well-being.

'The poor child is better this morning,' madame replied, solemnly wagging her head. 'But, alas! it will be several days before she can hope to be able to put her foot to the ground. She begged me, however, to thank you, monsieur, should you call, for your goodness to her.'

Try as he would to conceal it, there could be no sort of doubt that Browne was pleased that she should have thought about him. He begged Madame Bernstein to inform her that he had called to inquire, and then bade her good-bye. He had hoped to have discovered something concerning the girl's history; but as it was plain to him that madame was not one who would be easily induced to make disclosures, he abandoned the attempt.

He had passed down the passage, and was in the act of leaving the hotel, when a voice reached him from a room on the right which caused him no little surprise. At the same instant the door opened, and no less a person than Maas himself stood before him.

'Why, my dear Browne, really this is most charming,' he cried as he came forward. 'I had not the very least idea of finding you here.'

'Nor I of finding you,' Browne retorted. 'I understood that you were going for a walk up the mountain.'

'I did go,' the other replied, 'but the fog was so thick that I changed my mind and came in here for a glass of Vermouth prior to going on board. Believe me, there is nothing like Vermouth for counteracting the evil effects of fog. Will you let me persuade you to try a glass? The brand is excellent.'

Browne thanked him, but declined. He did not like finding the man in the hotel; but, as things were, he could not see that he had any right

to complain. He only hoped that Maas knew nothing of his reason for being there. Conversant, however, as he was with his friend's peculiarities, he felt certain he would say nothing about it to any one, even supposing he had discovered it.

Leaving the hotel together, they made their way down to the boat, and in something less than a quarter of an hour were on board the yacht once more. The fog still continued, and was destined to do so for the remainder of the day.

On the following morning they had arranged to leave Merok for Aalsund, and thence to turn south on their homeward journey. Fortunately the weather had cleared sufficiently by the time

day dawned to admit of their departure, and accordingly at the appointed hour, dipping her ensign to the village in token of farewell, the yacht swung round and headed for the pass under the Pulpit Rock. Browne was on the bridge at the time, and it was with a sensible feeling of regret that he bade farewell to the little village nestling at the foot of the snow-covered mountains. Never did he remember to have experienced such regret in leaving a place before. Whether he and Katherine Petrovitch would ever meet again was more than he could tell; it seemed to him extremely unlikely, and yet— But at this juncture he shook his head very wisely at the receding mountains, and told himself that that was a question for Fate to decide.

COLLECTORS AND COLLECTING.



HE instinct of the collector is among the commonest among men, and there are few which develop earlier. The contents of the pockets of the schoolboy, wonderfully varied and including many treasured articles

for which he would never pretend to have a use, all prove that this instinct exists in him; and it would be difficult to say how much of happiness he must lose if it is anyhow stifled in the course of his up-growing. For the collector is by way of being the happiest of men.

Young people should be trained to collect. The son of a lady who may here be called the Wisest Mother on Earth has one very early recollection. It is of an occasion when he was led to a curious old escritoire and presented with a green Servian stamp of the value of fifty centimes, which had been kept in one of the small drawers almost from the day of his birth against the time when it should be thought well to start him on the career of a collector. He still has the stamp, along with many thousands of others; but other things have come to interest him more than these, and 'tis but rarely he opens his album. More than once he has been tempted to sell the collection in order that he might have the funds wherewith to purchase some article more to his taste at the present time. He is inclined to regret the fact that he never had the heart to do so when he recollects a lovely bureau-bookcase by Chippendale which would otherwise have been his to-day. But the collection will never be sold so long as he lives, nor will the album ever be entirely forgotten.

He was given many hundreds of hours of happiness along with that green Servian stamp, and of these the collection remains for a monument. How should one sell at its mere market value a Mulready envelope when one remembers

the joy with which one found it at the very bottom of a huge pile of ancient letters that were just about to be burned by the executors of him to whom they had been addressed? How should a five-pound note appear in any way the equivalent of a certain obsolete Ceylon, when one can recall, if one opens the album at the page it adorns, the tale of how it was stolen while its owner was at school, and recovered only after two whole terms of detective work that might have fitted that boy for permanent employment at Scotland Yard? Some day his executors will do the album up in a parcel and send it off to the auction-room; dealers will fight for it, and the man whose bid is highest will break up the collection, robbing the stamps of that individual history which each of them now possesses. But for the present the stamps are quickly growing more and more valuable; and once a month, or thereabouts, their owner looks at them and gratefully recalls the good times they gave him in the old days that are gone by.

Here is the place for a confession. He has collected eggs, and butterflies, and minerals; but in these he has no longer any interest, though in the course of acquiring them he gained much information whose possession tends to make life pleasant. But the stamps were his first love, and to this day he cannot be quite cold. There were certain countries in which he took a special interest, striving to render his sets of the stamp complete. Even now he occasionally finds himself tempted to stop outside the window of a dealer; and if those countries have been issuing new stamps, he is quite certain to go within and buy them in the end. With the philatelist the instinct exists perhaps in its most rudimentary form. His desire is merely to accumulate, and his only criterion is that of mere rarity. He has much of the blessedness of the collector; but he

reaches a higher stage when he gives himself over to the search and accumulation of things which are beautiful as well as rare. The owner of the album sometimes feels that all the money he can spare ought to go in the purchase of prints and china and beautiful old furniture, and is a little ashamed of the survival in him of the rudimentary form of that instinct whose indulgence has given his life its pleasantness.

Prints, china, and furniture: they are enough to occupy the whole of a man's leisure, and to render it delightful. The art of Japan is much derided by the vulgar, and to collect the colour-prints which illustrate the ancient life of the country is to be looked askance on by one's house-keeper, who ignores them so scrupulously as to make one wish she would openly protest. You know that she finds them altogether unintelligible, and so worthy of all condemnation. The faces of dead and gone beauties she would declare to be unlike the faces of any women who ever lived; the postures of famous actors strike her as the merest manifestations of stark lunacy; the landscapes convey to her no more definite an impression of the country than would be suggested by the smudgy drawings executed by a child with its first box of water-colours. To the man who has studied them, and gone forth to seek them in salerooms or in the shops of soft-voiced, obsequious Japanese dealers, they appeal quite differently. They are a rest to the eye in quiet moments, for colour and tone are alike delicious. They are an unfailing source of interest in moments more active, for they are continually recalling something new about the life men lived in old Japan, when great artists worked for wages of a few pence daily, and executed masterpieces for a few shillings apiece.

One has also, as one looks at them upon the walls and turns them over lovingly in the portfolio, the delight of remembering how and where they were acquired. It is a part of the business of being a collector to have very little money, so that one may have the privilege of wondering afterwards how it is that one has been able to convert so small a sum into so great an accumulation of beauty. Time was—and by no means long ago—when one could buy these colour-prints cheaply in long-established tea-shops, or from dealers in curios who had never heard of Utamaro, Hiroshigé, Hokusai, and a score of other great painters. Nowadays they have been discovered by the art critics, and there is scarcely a man of them but we are more or less reliably informed as to his life and his method of working, his course of study, and the students who came to him for instruction when he was famous at last. Concerning two of them books have been written, and it was only the lamented death of M. Edmond de Goncourt which robbed several of the others of similar honours which had been promised.

The prints, then, begin to be costly; but if the task of the collector has been made more difficult, it is hardly less pleasing. You will not any longer—except by a miracle, such as happens once in the life of many a collector—get a complete set of Hiroshigé's *Views of the Tokaido* for a trifle of three pounds ten, which was what was paid by one proud owner of the set. But if you know what is beautiful you may very likely come across an honest dealer whose ideas are merely commercial. He may consider that two prints he lays before you are of precisely equal value. Your opportunity comes when you recognise that one of the two, being perfectly beautiful, is priceless, and presently buy it at the figure that will be paid for the other later on by some misguided collector who has not the saving sense of beauty.

This sense, unfortunately, stands in need of educating. Every collector should possess a locked lumber-room, or play the dealer now and again; for all must make mistakes, and the results of these are all the more obvious according as the general average of one's successes is high. There must be a constant process of elimination. One collector, who is not altogether unknown, has earned the gratitude of unnumbered friends. To each as a wedding-present he has given a Chippendale chair, or a blue-and-white plate, or perhaps a pair of brass candlesticks. These are presents not likely to be duplicated, and his friends have felt themselves delicately flattered by his gift of a thing that must have cost him some research. It has been noticed, however, that he does not make presents of this kind to such of his friends as are themselves collectors. He has never bought anything that had not a good deal of merit; but this little habit of his affords some explanation of the fact that the uniform beauty of his personal collection excites the admiration of all the cognoscenti.

This sense of beauty is the saving of the collector of moderate means. There are dealers who are themselves most excellent judges. One such man, possessing objects that are infinitely desirable in almost all the branches of art, is perennially poor, because he hates to sell you anything for which he can conscientiously charge a decent price. Great people visit his shop continually, and he might ask what he liked and be sure of getting it. He has been known, however, when he has received warning of an impending visit, to hide the very objects which he knows the coming connoisseur would surely buy if he should see them. Once upon a time (and this is no fairy-tale!) he had an unlimited commission to buy choice pieces of Nankin for a wealthy collector. He bought a few choice pieces, and took his commission, albeit he loathed himself for so doing. Then he heard privately that a small but exquisite collection was in the market. He went straight to his employer and imparted the fact to him; then

he resigned his commission. The employer thinks him mad to this day. The truth was that he could not endure the thought of buying so lovely a collection and handing it on to another, even though he would have taken a handsome reward for so doing, and could never have afforded to purchase it for himself. The only way in which one may deal profitably with him is by acquiring a knowledge and an enthusiasm equal to his own. Then he will part with all that is best among his possessions — things that the ordinary wealthy customer is never even allowed to see; and you afterwards suspect that he has sold them to you without the smallest profit.

He is always poor, and occasionally he is absolutely bound to sell extensively. At such periods his company is not to be sought, for his temper is capricious. He gathers together a great quantity of goods, and sells them in the mass to certain people in London. Then he goes back to his shop and broods over what remains until he has found comfort in its beauty and in the acquisition of new objects of virtue. He is quite happy, and quite regardless of the ordinary rules of commerce until new purchases have entirely depleted his purse. But happily he is not the sort of dealer with whom one has usually to reckon.

The dealer of the more ordinary type is the man who knows the commercial value of everything; he would rarely be deceived into buying a modern imitation, however clever. But he has not the sense of beauty, and, be he never so set on getting the highest price for his wares, you may still get bargains in his shop. You have been told that such-and-such a man in some small provincial town has usually a big stock of antique furniture. The opportunity of a holiday comes; and, although the weather is abominable, you journey down by a slow train and hardly give yourself time for a meagre lunch before visiting the shop. It happens that you have arrived on a day when the man has a big stock, and has not for some time received a visit from any of the dealers who are wont to come down from bigger towns and buy up what he has collected. You imagine he will be in want of cash and ready to accept the most moderate of prices. Before long you are utterly amazed, and wonder why you did not stop in the big city you inhabit and spend your money there. His demands are exorbitant.

But you have endured an uncomfortable journey, and it may be some of your friends have been told that you were about to make beautiful additions to your collection. Moreover, the man has an extensive stock, and so you wander about his show-rooms and continue to inspect it. In the end you have probably made several purchases, and, simply by knowing the difference that is made by even the slightest change in the curves of the back of a good chair, and by recognising beauty when you see it, you are just as able to congratulate

yourself as the ordinary man who tumbles on a place where prices are low and buys there with a judgment less refined. It may be added that this sort of success may just as well as not await you in the shop of the man who does not scruple to attempt to sell you the modern products of Whitechapel as genuine antiques. In such journeys as this, moreover, there is always the chance that you may light on some small shop where the prices happen to be ridiculously low and the wares good. Then you are quickly rewarded for all your labours. There is a certain Sheraton table, for example—

A brief account of all the collectors one knows would be interesting, for each has his peculiarities, usually engaging. One of these is so poor that he can but rarely buy for himself the beautiful things he discovers. Yet he is for ever wandering in quest of them, for he is genuinely distressed that any loveliness should remain in the hands of people who do not understand it. He has a marvellous taste, and a deal of technical experience in certain branches of art. Only convince him that you know and love what is beautiful and he will place both these qualities at your disposal, telling you of all his discoveries, and buying you the most delightful additions to your collection at the most ridiculously low rates. He is afterwards fully satisfied with the knowledge that you possess and understand them.

There has perhaps been over much talk of prices; but, as was said above, it is part of the business of being a collector to have but little money, and to make sacrifices in exchange for rich rewards. The world calls every one who is engaged in the gathering together of objects of art by the title of collector, but it errs in so doing. The joys and the griefs of the true collector can never be known to the man who is in a position to send his agents into all parts of the world, bidding them use their taste and their knowledge to find out beautiful objects, for which he will straightway write a cheque when he has been told of their whereabouts and properly assured of their beauty. The poor collector rejoices when he has bought something at a low price, because he has thus the more money left to rescue some other desirable object from the hands of the Philistine.

One is apt to dwell a little sadly on the fact that men must die, and that every collection, even if it be not scattered, must lose in the hands of a new possessor a great part of the interest it had while it belonged to him who originally brought it together. But there is consolation to be had, and it were well if every collector would learn by heart the words of Edmond de Goncourt, who loved his collections passionately, and yet joyfully foresaw that they would be scattered: 'It is my desire that my drawings, my prints, my books—all the art objects, in short, which have made the happiness of my life—shall not suffer the cold tomb of a museum, and be looked on without apprecia-

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tion by the indifferent passer-by. I order that they be sold under the hammer of the auctioneer, so that the delight I got in the acquisition of each object may be given again, by each of them,

to some inheritor of my tastes.' *Tout casse, tout passe*; but one's beautiful possessions will never cease to be cared for so long as they continue to exist.

THE ISLAND OF 'PAUL AND VIRGINIA.'

By CARLYLE SMYTHE, B.A.



F all British possessions, Mauritius has, I believe, the most vexatious system of quarantine. Like the *Legion d'Honneur*, few escape it. The reason is not far to seek. Half the population of the island is in mourning, and the other expects to be. Exclusive of Indians, there are about 350,000 persons—mostly widows; and St Pierre struck a true local note when he made of his two leading ladies one a widow and the other a derelict. The principal reason of this prevailing widowhood is that the capital, which is almost exclusively composed of males, has been gutted by fire, and more than once ripped up by cyclones, which find an admirable theatre for their work in the semicircle of hills which encloses the town. But the devastation committed by fire and wind counts as nothing when compared with the havoc dealt by plague and pestilence. In addition to malarial fever, which is always with them, and which alone in one year swept off a ninth of the inhabitants of the island, Mauritius has so often extended its hospitality to epidemics of the most virulent form of measles, typhoid, scarlatina, chicken-pox, small-pox, and cholera that these diseases may now be regarded as quite at home there. The death-rate of the capital is about fifty-three. In these circumstances some stringent form of quarantine was needful; but the local council of health have put it on the wrong end: vessels should be quarantined when they leave Port Louis, not when they arrive. To have carried about the person one of the local bank-notes, which have the odour of a graveyard and are unfit for publication, should warrant the isolation, if not vaccination, of any person going into a clean community. Talking of vaccination reminds me that in these out-of-the-way places that operation is not as pleasant as it might be. I was forced to undergo it, and when the doctor was finished I asked, pricked by curiosity, how he managed to obtain pure calf-lymph in such a place. 'Oh, bless you!' replied this resident medical officer, 'that's not calf; that's the best black baby. What's more, it never fails.' It didn't. On the contrary, it was a huge success and enjoyed a prolonged run. But I doubt whether smallpox itself would have been more painful than that conversion of my body into an arena for some young barbarian's blood to play in.

In a sense Mauritius is an annexe, a sort of

remote suburb, of India, with which doubtless it was at some early geological period quite intimately related, since both the fauna and flora of the island are much more Asiatic than African. To-day, by its inhabitants, it is singularly like a bit of India that has drifted out to sea. As you land there is the dear old Indian crow on the docks, as perky and familiar as his cousins in Bombay; the rowers in the 'plying-boat' that takes you ashore are Hindus; while the rupee is the medium of exchange. Nearly half the population of the island is composed of Indians, most of whom were originally imported by the sugar-planters, who, indeed, still continue the practice of introducing the blackleg labour, under contracts for three years, at a monthly wage of about five rupees and all found. At the expiration of their indenture, being skilled sugar artisans, the Indians can earn a rupee a day on the plantations, or, as they mostly prefer, set up for themselves and cultivate small plots of their own, selling the produce to the big dealers. They are a thriving, industrious, peaceable section of the community, keeping the fasts and feasts and worshipping the gods of their ancestors in that far country. In Port Louis there is a Hindu temple, a mosque, and a joss-house; while there are almost as many Buddhists in the island as there are Nonconformists. The influx of Indians is in nowise due to the absence of native labour, but to the lazy and worthless character of the Creoles, as they are called—a mongrel race issuing from Malay, Dutch, and French progenitors, and mostly the descendants of liberated slaves. As might be imagined from a glance at their genealogical tree, the Creoles are an idle, dishonest, and insubordinate class.

Nobody who by any means can avoid it lives in Port Louis, where at any moment the hot hand of malaria may, like a grim constable, run you before a magistrate who sentences oftener than he acquits. In addition to this abiding dread, there is another objection to a residence in the capital, and that is the wreckage wrought by a cyclone within the amphitheatre that holds the town. Whenever a cyclone is signalled, and its direction, distance, and dimensions are ascertained, the inhabitants of the port are warned by a concerted code of signals. The first merely indicates that a suspected stranger is prowling about in the neighbourhood; the second, that its intentions are piratical—begin packing; the third and last, leave town at once and look out for squalls. When this dread sound is heard a

frantic stampede from the capital begins, and every avenue, every means of conveyance, by road and rail, is crowded to suffocation in the mad rush for safety. This of a tolerable sort is found in the residential highlands, where the houses are constructed to resist the gyrating gale. Provisions having been laid in upon the first signal, every aperture in the houses is closed, every door is firmly bolted, and the windows, every one of which is protected by a wooden door on the outside and another on the inside, are locked and barred. Here, hermetically sealed from all sunlight, the people are confined, sometimes three or four days, until the hurricane is spent and the wind gone off on another tack. If the centre of the cyclone passes over the place bars and barricades are of no earthly avail; everything and everybody are swallowed up in the maelström of wind. When all is quiet again and the danger over, the inhabitants return to Port Louis; and the capital has to undergo a process of reconstruction. But at any time Port Louis is a place of few attractions. Once a year it indulges in a 'season,' when there are high jinks in the little town. To do the thing in style the inhabitants import a grand opera company from France, with a full ballet, of course; they also purchase in Australia a few horses, at about £20 a head, for the race carnival, where the elegance of Mauritian society may disport itself. Finally, excursion steamers are run from Africa.

For the passing stranger there is only one habitable spot in the island: Curepipe, situated about fifteen miles from the capital, and lying two thousand feet above the sea, is the highest and healthiest settlement in Mauritius. This village is situated in the very heart of sugarland, on Plaines Wilhelms, where, in fact, the cane was first cultivated in the island by two Dutchmen of the name Wilhelm. There or thereabouts high society has settled itself, and Government House, which is close by, gives a tone to the neighbourhood; the greater part of the British garrison is quartered on the outskirts, and Curepipe is one of the principal escapes during a cyclone. But the atmosphere is far too heavily laden with moisture for personal comfort. Even in the driest and sunniest weather clothes become covered with mildew in the course of a day, whilst the poor smoker has often to get a light from the kitchen fire because he has thoughtlessly left his match-box on the table for an hour. They sometimes have rain at Curepipe, and in one summer shower lasting thirteen hours twenty-five inches were registered. In some parts of Australia the inhabitants do not get as much in three years.

This exceedingly warm and moist climate is as good as if it had been made to order for the luxuriant growth of cane, to the cultivation of which the whole plateau is devoted. Among sugar countries, Mauritius enjoys the distinction of being the spot where growing cane from seed was first successfully

accomplished. The government, in order to stimulate eager research in this direction, offered a heavy bonus for the discovery; and M. Perramet, with whom I spent a very pleasant day in sugarland, was the fortunate man, although, as he himself admits, the find was largely the result of an accident. The reward was considerable, and everybody, amateur and planter alike, became a collector of seed and competitor for the prize. Seed in consequence went to a premium, and it was considered a pardonable petty theft to steal the precious fluffy little things that had blown from some field on to your neighbour's coat in the train. M. Perramet, being a planter on a large scale, neglected no opportunity, and always kept a business eye on his neighbour's clothes, thence transplanting many a strayed seed into his own pocket. Some of these had been left by chance in a coat that was put aside at the change of the season, and when this garment was brought out to be worn again the seed had sprouted. Although the secret was soon out, M. Perramet continues to be the most successful grower, raising last year five thousand seedlings.

The village of Curepipe is quite pretty, with its unpretentious light-blue and white villas encompassed with rich tropical vegetation—palms, tree-ferns, and plantains—in the midst of vast fields of cane; and with its prim green lanes, in whose natural hedges grow the bougainvillia, morning glory, and lantana entwined in thick and amorous tangles; whilst the warm moist air is perfumed from an unseen censer with champak odours and frangipani. The place is almost entirely French, and scarce a word of English is ever heard in either street or store. The people are hothouse specimens of the country-folk of France. The priest that one passes in the street is not the regular priest of an English colony, but l'Abbé Constantin, with long black cassock, broad-brimmed hat, and inseparable umbrella. The very funerals are decked with Gallic gewgaws and tinsel, whilst the person at the head, attracting to himself the attention that should be devoted to the dead, is some Delobelee burying his daughter Desiré; and the couple walking in the cool of the afternoon, arm-in-arm, serious and silent as if resolving the mysteries of the Cosmos, are monsieur and madame from St Servan. Everything is foreign. Here and there about the bijou township are stores bearing the strange legend, 'Consolidated Retailer.' That conceals John Chinaman, in whose hands is most of the small retail trade of the island. Even he, I was informed, endeavours to pass himself off as of French extraction, palavers the *patois*, and affects a Gallic patronym—Leon Say, Anatole Paris, Calais Ahoy, I suppose, or something of that sort. The very streets of this out-of-the-world village have a French accent in their immortal names. In the green sequestered lanes of Curepipe, Lamartine, St Pierre, Buffon, Molière may still live when France has become a Russian province

and some wanderer from the underworld shall take his stand, in the midst of a vast solitude, on a broken arch of the Bridge Alexandre III. to sketch the ruins of the Panthéon.

The place is so thoroughly and tranquilly French that the sight of a couple of Tommies walking in the streets and whistling 'Mrs 'Enery 'Awkins' comes with the shock of an invasion. These symbols of foreign domination irritate both Creole and Frenchmen, who alike hate the ubiquitous red-coat; for, as Curepipe is, so is the whole island essentially French in language, manners, and morals. It is difficult to make one's self understood anywhere in this British colony without being able to speak the bastard *patois* known as Creole French. English is, of course, the official language, and compulsory both in the schools and courts, although evidence may be tendered in French, providing the judge and jury approve, while French is also permitted in the Legislative Council. The Code Napoléon is still the basis of all local law, and will remain so until the century of English occupation is reached—that is to say, until 1910. The newspapers are published either entirely in French or one-half French and the other a literal translation, which is quite unnecessary, since everybody who can read understands a sort of French.

Among the mass of the people, apart from the Indian population, there is always a strong feeling in favour of France and antagonistic to England, and the slenderest excuse is seized upon to exhibit this. When France alleged that her army had subdued the Malagassies, a committee was formed in Mauritius to collect funds with a view of presenting a sword to the conquering hero, General Duquesne, as a memento of his victorious entry into Antananarivo. Thereupon a few English residents, not to be behindhand in their recognition of the real merits of the French general's exploit, clubbed together to buy him a walking-stick as an emblem of his stroll from Tamatave to the capital. This acute racial feeling is naturally a constant source of trouble, and makes the government of the colony a matter of difficulty and delicacy. Nor does the trouble promise to diminish as the century of British dominion approaches its end, particularly as some alarmist members of the French community apprehend that the Code Napoléon will be superseded as the base of local law by the imperial statutes. This fear, real or feigned, is probably quite groundless; but nothing will ever persuade a Frenchman that the English can resist an occasion for perfidy. In Mauritius especially the querulousness and plotting of the French section are at once unreasonable and ungrateful, as may be seen from a passing glance at the history of this island of many *aliases*.

Probably the date of the real discovery of Cirne, as the island was first called, will always remain a debatable question; but there is a very strong probability that Dom Fernando Pereira visited it in 1507—which would entitle him to the kudos

of discoverer—and named it after his own vessel. At any rate, the credit of the earliest historical discovery belongs to the Portuguese, because—beyond all challenge—Mascaregnas, after whom the whole group was called, visited Cirne in 1528. Spain took possession of the island in 1580, but only to be ejected nineteen years later by the Dutch, who, in honour of their Stadtholder, christened the island Mauritius. The Dutch East India Company occupied Mauritius simply as a station on the highway to Batavia, the great Eastern depôt of the company. Until 1712 they were the landlords, and then deserted the island as of no value. Almost immediately Mauritius became the headquarters of a race of pirates, or, as they were termed, Maroons (Malay slaves, mostly, whom the Dutch had introduced); but three years later the French India Company took possession, and, exercising the right of a new tenant, named their acquisition *L'île de France*. For nearly a century the island continued a fortified outpost of France, and was mainly used as a base of operations against India. During the whole of that occupation the inhabitants were subjected not only to the piratical raids of the Maroons, but, in addition, to all the changes and chances of the Napoleonic wars. In 1810 the English captured Port Napoleon, freed the island from the Maroons, liberated the slaves, and settled a long peace on the land, which, if it had remained a French colony, would have been exposed to all the factions and disasters that have distracted and decimated France during the past century, and, in all likelihood, would have been utilised as a convict settlement. Instead of that the only disturbance caused by the English annexation is that the island changed its name once more, and reverted to the old style—Mauritius. The disaffected section may, however, possess their souls in patience with the double assurance, first, that John Bull is always glad to let well alone and place the government of his colonies as much as possible upon the shoulders of the colonists; secondly, that as long as Mauritius is of the slightest strategical value to India the English dominion will endure.

But it is not on account of its early legendary history, or the island's military importance, or because it is a common centre for cyclones, and was once the home of the dodo, that Mauritius has an abiding interest for the general reader, but because of the current supposition that in this colony the originals of *Paul and Virginia*, those two children of Nature, pure and simple, enjoyed the innocent rapture of love until awakened to the relentless bitterness of life.

Bernardin de St Pierre, it is true, passed three years in *L'île de France*, and wrote the novel after his return; although, by the way, twenty-two years elapsed between his departure from the island and his commencement of the story. True

it is, also, that he affirmed the characters to be real persons, and the narrative faithful and exact in every detail. Despite this express statement, it is now generally admitted that the hero and heroine had their only existence in the imagination of their author. This deliberate false assertion accorded precisely with the whole character of the man, St Pierre, whose life was one long lie to all the beautiful principles which he preached as the disciple and in the style of Rousseau. St Pierre's text was that true beatitude can be attained only by living in harmony with Nature, by loving Virtue itself alone, and by scorning the illusory advantages of wealth. His practice was to desert his *fiancée* because she was virtue itself, though poor, and to marry one whom he disliked, but who possessed the 'illusory advantages of wealth.' In glowing prose he insisted upon the harmony of Nature; in cold blood he married at sixty-three a girl of eighteen. Beautiful as Paul and Virginia are in their lives, it is difficult to believe that their creator could have felt anything in common with characters whose guiding principles are so diametrically opposed to his own leading motives. It was the popular cant of that period of unbridled license in France to affect an admiration for innocence and to maintain that civilised man was unhappy and vicious, while man in his natural state was happy and virtuous. St Pierre simply pandered to the craze of the moment, and in doing so achieved by this one book an enduring fame.

Every visitor to Mauritius may readily detect evidences of the author's carelessness in the matter of local colour and topography. There are particularly two glaring instances. That beautiful and poetic description of the panorama of the whole island, gained from the eastern side of the mountain behind Port Louis, is an absolute impossibility. Again, the hero and heroine in bare feet and one day journey through tangled and trackless forests, over several mountains, across five tributary streams and one wide, deep ravine to the slave-owner's farm and back. The distance traversed covers about thirty miles, and, in the circumstances, the journey would require at the least a week, not to mention a commissariat service by the way. But critical investigation has gone further than the local colour, and discovered that Virginia is a synthesis, in trivial details, of several persons, men and women. Her name was borrowed from the girl whom St Pierre jilted for 'the illusory advantages of wealth.' For her life on the island there was no original as far as critical research can prove, although unimportant incidents have been traced to little events which it is known St Pierre witnessed on the boulevards of Paris. But three persons are mingled together to build up her dramatic death. For some time a Mdlle. Mallet was identified by what purported to be the record of an eye-witness, her brother, as the unique original of this scene in the story. True

enough a vessel named the *St Geran* was wrecked somewhere about the spot mentioned in the book, and a Mdlle. Mallet was among those who were lost; but here her part in the making of Virginia ends. On board the same boat was also a Mdlle. Caillon, who, according to an official record of the wreck, was the lady whom an officer offered to assist in reaching Amber Island. This officer had paid his attentions to Mdlle. Caillon during the voyage out, and his gallantry was thus only natural. Upon such slender facts (for Paul appears to have been a complete figment), all of which were inextricably mingled in treatment, did St Pierre build his somewhat tiresome and wholly untrue picture of the beatitude and chastity of life when exempt from the contaminations of civilisation. But the wide and instantaneous reception of the work—the picture of an ideally pure life—among the corrupt and debased society preceding the Revolution is, after all, the most inexplicable circumstance connected with *Paul and Virginia*.

TO BOGGANING.

I WATCHED a gay and fascinating throng
Go sliding down a snow-slope, one by one,
Until the last of that procession long
Had turned a distant corner and was gone.

Some sat upright and swayed from side to side;
Some lay at length, their hands embracing pegs;
Some trailed an alpenstock behind to guide;
And some accomplished marvels with their legs.

I said, 'A lovely picture, framed in snow,
The figures faultless and the colours warm;
There never lived an artist who could show
Such gaiety of heart or grace of form.'

Yet I have heard there are, among the rest,
Who seem to think the 'human form divine'
Is not seen altogether at its best
When wobbling wildly down a steep incline.

They say that garments lose their graceful curves,
That boots assume too prominent a place,
That unaccustomed speed upsets the nerves
And stamps a look of terror on the face.

But hypercritical and captious these
Who look at Nature's self with jaundiced eyes,
Who see no loveliness in moonlit seas
Or fleecy clouds that fleck the summer skies.

And so, next turn, I took my place among
The crowd that glided down the smooth snow-slope,
And looked, like all the rest of that gay throng,
A not displeasing spectacle, I hope.

C. J. BODEN.